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ABSTRACT

New Zealand education underwent reform in 1989. The first seven years of education reform were marked by drastic systemic change in the administrative system coupled with very few support links or services for schools. The school principals were cast primarily as middle managers, which lessened their focus on the educational aspect of their role. This paper presents findings of a study that implemented a professional-development model for New Zealand principals. The Principal's Partnerships was developed as a model that combined coaching and supervision to both support and challenge school leaders. Each principal worked with another principal on leadership and school-development issues. The group also met regularly with the researcher. The program helped the principals prioritize the educational leadership aspect of their role, created structured opportunities for reflection, and increased collegiality and collaboration. They became more critically reflective and became more critically aware of the political aspects of New Zealand education. The paper describes the experiences of one principal, who confronted his own circumstances and gained a sense of political agency. The paper also discusses the importance of creating democratic curricula and experiences in schools. A conclusion is that the professional-development model's use of critical reflection helped the principals achieve praxis by challenging them to see beyond their own school site to the larger picture of education in New Zealand. (Contains 44 references.) (LMI)

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Paper Title:

**The praxis of educational leadership versus the cult of managerialism:
Developing a model for the professional development of school leaders
during the initial years of Tomorrow's Schools.**

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During the period between 1990 and 1995 I worked with groups of primary school leaders (Robertson, 1991, 1995) studying their role in their self-managing schools and facilitating action research to develop a model of professional development. This model aimed to assist these principals to become critically reflective and focus on educative leadership (Duignan & Macpherson, 1992) by creating opportunities for them to do so. In a conference address, held before the effects of the 1989 reform of educational administration had fully impacted, Ivan Snook (1990, p. 7) had warned New Zealand principals to be wary of how they viewed their primary role. He said that a school principal must be a "leader in the ranks, not a manager outside them." He was quite explicit on how this should be achieved. He told them "You must make leadership your priority and delegate as much as you can of everything else ... to make light of the management burdens, and to grasp the added opportunity to be leaders."

However, the first seven years of the reforms were an era of contradictions, compromises, dichotomies and dilemmas. School principals were thrust into new roles and responsibilities for which they had little prior knowledge or training. There were constant changes and contradictions in the information disseminated which led to a lack of confidence in providers and receivers alike. Charter frameworks changed three times. It was difficult to get the answers to simple questions or even to know what questions to ask. Unfortunately, too, the sources of greatest support service to schools, the Department of Education and local Education Boards along with the Inspectorate, had been disestablished. Ministry of Education personnel were in new roles and responsibilities. The Colleges of Education were given the task of training for principals and Boards of Trustees in the first year and did not have the necessary information or knowledge of the new roles, or the staffing, to effectively carry out the training. The Education Review Office was constantly being restructured and developing new roles. All aspects of the administrative system were undergoing drastic change simultaneously and therefore there were very few support links or services for the schools at this time.

The school principals often seemed to be placed in positions similar to that described by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) as *middle managers*, having to take educational leadership roles to implement changes that they had not initiated and therefore did not necessarily believe were important for the improvement of education in their school. The managerial thrust on school leaders was dominant (Codd, 1990) and the principals were faced with increasing difficulty in being able to focus on the educational aspect of their role (Robertson, 1991). Not surprisingly, one of the principals, when reminded of Snook's (1990) warning early in the research period, responded by saying "With respect, people who propound this totally unassailable maxim should try to apply it when they are in the principal's office."

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Many of the new roles that the principals were required to carry out were not related to learning and teaching programmes within the school but were duties such as building maintenance and the establishment of new procedures for jobs once covered by the local education board such as ordering of supplies or obtaining relief staffing or obtaining the most cost-effective plumber for a broken water pipe. All of these administrative tasks increased principals' workloads. Evidence from research on the first year indicated that principals and Boards of Trustees were suffering from a deluge of paper and the learning curves for the new roles and responsibilities were too great for many (see McConnell and Jeffries, 1991; Ramsay, Harold, Hawk, Kaai, Marriott & Poskitt, 1990; Robertson, 1991; Wylie, 1989). Principals felt their workload had been too heavy (Wylie, 1989) and that "there was an increasing emphasis upon the management role of the principal with a corresponding decrease in professional leadership" (McConnell & Jeffries, 1991, p. 5).

A New Zealand Principals' Federation survey (New Zealand Principals' Federation, 1995) showed that 400 principals resigned in 1994 which, they stated, was twice as many as in any preceding years. Other research at this time found that principals were, by their account, "beginning to show signs of strain" in maintaining the higher workload involved in school self-management" (Wylie, 1994, p. 66). The conclusion of this research also stated the cost had been extremely high in terms of additional workloads and teacher morale and that "it is not clear whether New Zealand education can continue to rely on people carrying such loads without some relief" (Wylie, 1994, p. 140). These factors all impacted on the research of a professional development model for school leaders at this time. It was hoped that the model of professional development developed in the present study would go some way to providing this relief for the 12 principals involved in the research.

I realised that there needed to be a model of professional development which both supported *and* challenged school leaders for them to be able to prioritise educative leadership and make changes in their leadership behaviours. The support would be provided through the "critical friend" concept (Costa & Kallick, 1993) of working with a professional colleague. The presence of the researcher would provide the necessary challenge by disrupting the typification of the principals' daily practice in requiring the principals to work in different ways with their colleagues. Utilising the Hawthorn effect of the presence of the researcher would ensure that this occurred.

Therefore, the model of Principals' Partnerships which developed during the research period, encompassed the processes of coaching and supervision, in which each principal worked with another principal on leadership and school development. The 12 principals in the research study also met regularly as a group with the researcher facilitating these sessions. Previous research on the professional development of teachers had shown

coaching by peers and professional supervision to be a vital part of the change process (Barnett, 1989; Goldhammer, 1969; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Smyth, 1984).

The coaching processes in the model entailed observation of leadership practices. The principals learned how to observe and report behaviours accurately without interpretation and judgment. The partners observed each other in their own school environments, in such activities as taking staff meetings, working with their teachers and Boards of Trustees and in interaction with parents. As part of the coaching processes, they learned how to give and receive evaluative feedback upon agreed areas of focus. They also learnt active listening skills and how to conduct reflective interviews about aspects of school practice to assist their partner to reflect upon the values, beliefs and reasons behind particular practices and the ultimate effects that these have on children's learning. They were taught these coaching skills and were given many opportunities to practise them in the workshop setting as well as in their schools. All of the principals in the research group commented that they had not previously used these skills with their colleagues or for their own professional development before their involvement in this research.

This model helped the principals to take the time to refocus on their educational leadership role and work systematically towards the achievement of school goals. These principals found that working with a colleague helped them to prioritise the educative leadership aspect of their role in their schools. The principals soon found that they were reflecting more on their own leadership practices than they had previously been doing. They began to use action research techniques, of action followed by a period of critical reflection and analysis, in their school development processes. They found it had always been easy for them to focus on systems, sports organisation, forms that needed filling, budgets that needed finalising, and grants that needed applying for, but that there were not many opportunities for them to focus on their educational leadership within their schools. In fact, during the research period, they still felt that educational leadership was in danger of being put aside by all other demands on their time. The findings echoed time and time again, how reactionary, how busy, how much work school leaders had to cope with. Often these new tasks which were being required of principals were not related to the educational tasks for which they were trained and they needed to be open to new perspectives and approaches. Finding time for indepth reflection was difficult when their job conditions were typified by a myriad of brief, often unrelated, incidents. This research found that the outside facilitator, in this case, the researcher, was paramount to this process.

The principals needed to become increasingly aware of their values and the principles underlying their leadership practice and to achieve this they needed outside assistance. They needed to be challenged to take an enquiring approach and to ask themselves questions such as "What am I doing? Why am I doing this? and What effect do my

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actions have on children's learning?" (Smyth, 1985). An important part of this process was receiving evaluative feedback through the eyes of a critically reflective and respected colleague as often what the principals thought they were doing and what they were *actually* doing were quite different. If the principals were not aware of the discrepancy or gap between their theories-in-action and their espoused theories they would not be open to new learning. One of the most effective ways that theories-in-action can be discovered, according to Argyris (1976) is through the observation of one's behaviours by others.

When the principals *did* take the time to critically reflect, they were able to find more time for educational matters. One of the principals described it like this:

If you constantly ask this question 'What effect do my actions have on children's learning?' of yourself and your staff, its amazing how much irrelevant information you can quickly sift out. This often means less tasks to complete.

Principals' Partnerships set up the structure to ensure that opportunities for such reflection and outside perspectives were made available to these principals. The reflection led to much revelation about how the principals had been viewing their role previous to the research. One newly appointed principal voiced the frustration he was feeling after he became more critically reflective through working with his partner:

I've really wasted a year. I've looked more at the administration side rather than at the quality of education in the school and I haven't pushed that side enough. That's why I am a bit nervous that I've wasted this year.

This principal said that when he met with his other colleagues in other situations they did not discuss or focus on their own leadership. He continued to state emphatically "Apart from these sessions, with my partner in reflective interview, I cannot recall spending any time on thinking about my leadership style." Another principal agreed that the questions that his partner asked him in a reflective interview made him consider more carefully his actions and values. Another talked about the effect that the reflective interviews had on future actions in this school:

I had to think about my actions. My partner's reflective questioning and especially her last question "Would you do the same again?" made me think. I *would* handle things differently.

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The structure of the reflective interviews required these school leaders to develop the skill of asking indepth questions and utilising active listening techniques. They realised how seldom they were forced to question their own actions, justify their modes of operating within the school and articulate their philosophies. They did need help to achieve this. They realised that these interviews were more than the general discussions that they otherwise would have enjoyed with these same colleagues. The involvement in the research was seen to be a valuable form of professional development by these school leaders.

All of the principals commented on the fact that the structured opportunities for reflection had caused them to change in some ways, even if it was just that they were thinking more about their processes and the likely outcomes of their actions. There was a necessary amount of challenge to their previous ways-of-knowing from the observations and reflective interviews. As Schon (1983) put forward when he talked about the importance of reflection-on-action, outside perspectives, such as the Partnerships' programme provided, are important in the development process. Sometimes it was simply seeing that there were other ways of doing things which was the greatest challenge to a principal's theories-in-action.

They also stated that their partnership had helped them to hold onto their feelings of collegiality and collaboration. They had begun to realise that this had been in danger of being eroded by the competition between schools that the reforms were engendering. The partnership appeared to strengthen the bonds of collegiality. The links between schools flourished as a result of the principals' partnerships and joint staffmeetings, shared units of work and shared development of senior staff were some of the actions which followed. The teachers in these schools also noticed what their principals were doing for their professional development and the principals often commented on the positive role models they felt they portrayed to their staff of "principals-as-learners." In these ways the philosophy of collegial development and critical reflection on practice was not only pervasive between schools but within schools as well.

One of the most evident changes in principals' practice was simply in the depth of reflection and collaboration that was occurring as they worked in their schools to achieve their professional and personal goals. These principals had possibly always set goals but the support of the Partnership's programme helped them to formalise the structure to maintain focus and ultimately achieve the goals. Their partner also acted as an outside facilitator to help them keep the focus and impetus in the right direction. Previous research and development had demonstrated how important the role of an outside facilitator is in assisting school leaders to achieve their goals (Ramsay et al, 1990;

Robertson, 1991). Their partner's involvement helped the principals to constantly monitor their progress towards set goals and modify, then action, new plans.

An important finding was how small-p political (and not so small-p!) these principals became and how critically reflective they were when they came together to debate and discuss key educational issues. The principals found that they were becoming more proactive and assertive about what they believed in. One principal described how he viewed his primary role as the educational leader within a school community in this way:

I have become a bit more steely about those things I believe in. Having seen other schools has fortified me in the way I'm doing things. I think my philosophy of what I see as the role of the school and my role in that are reasonably set so I am prepared to do that now. Not just willing to do what the bureaucrats are saying we should.

Studies in England concluded that the principals there were "individually caught up in the managerial 'web' of ideas because they had never been offered a substantial opportunity to critically reflect upon their own assumptions about leadership" (Southworth, 1993, p. 83). There, as in New Zealand, there seemed to be very few opportunities for principals to be able to review their own leadership. I realised that these opportunities needed to be made available so that educational leadership could be reconstructed from the technocratic managerialism it was fast becoming to that of a critical practice.

The findings indicated that principals can be encouraged to become political through facilitated forums for discussion and debate. The ability of the researcher to stand outside the situation and ask questions about the principals' practice, had the effect of the "stranger" (Schutz, 1964) by providing challenges to assumptions held. This helped the principals to deconstruct and then reconstruct their reality. Their reality had been constructed by the societal influences at the time and they needed assistance to take a critical look and reconstruct their view of their roles as Foucault (1977) described as being important in the process of change. Some sort of dissonance was necessary for change to occur.

The outside perspectives and challenges helped the principals to take the time to lift their heads to see the trends of what was happening in education generally in New Zealand - to see the bigger picture. I asked one urban school leader whether he reflected more on what was happening to school leaders in New Zealand because of the

Partnerships' programme. He replied rather morosely to me:

I fear for them. All the time. I think that we will just end up as administrators. There are [many] off on stress leave already this year ... but as New Zealand principals I believe we are not going to sit back and take it and there will come a time when we will kick back.

However, Grace (1993, p. 363) was more pessimistic than this when he talked about the two options for educational leaders in this period of 'market accountability for schooling' in England. He said that:

Those headteachers who are drawn by the image of managing director, of skilful player of the educational market place, will experience the excitement of new roles to be practised - on what is sure to be called 'a new playing field'. Those for whom the traditional aspects of leadership were especially important, particularly in the cultural, pedagogic and pupil relations sectors, have to face the challenge of adjustment or flight from the field.

Unfortunately Wylie's (1997) research has indicated that "flight from the field" rather than "kicking back" is the preferred course of action for school leaders in New Zealand at the present time.

Codd (1990, p. 19) saw back in the first year of the reforms that "the terrain of education [was] being subjected to an oppressive ideological onslaught." This was the ideology of managerialism. Principals have continued to find it difficult to think about educational leadership seven years hence working on such terrain. Contradictory discourses have been abundant within current education reform (Codd, 1993; Robertson, 1995). Principals were constantly surrounded by technocratic, corporate language. The documents they read, Education Review Office and Ministry of Education requirements, individual contracts and conditions of employment, all served to move principals further and further away from working in the 'ranks' and into a 'them-and-us' type situation of 'management and workers'. Here, as in England, the language, assumptions and ideology of management had begun to dominate their language, consciousness, actions and modes of analysis within their schools (Grace, 1993). School leaders were finding themselves "increasingly functionally separated from their staff as they addressed issues of 'corporate' effectiveness" (Simpkins, 1994, p. 31). The rhetoric of the reforms abounded with words such as appraisal, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, competition, chief executive officers, audits, achievement objectives and performance outcomes and yet current

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effective leadership theory emphasises "power to, not over" and "democracy" and "building learning communities" and "working collaboratively." Were New Zealand school leaders caught up irretrievably in the managerial web?

It appeared that it could be that in this present educational climate there was actually no time or energy to be able to do more than manage *within* the system rather than leading for change *on* the system and this was of concern. The management roles are increasingly important in schools in New Zealand today but as Covey (1989, p. 102). stated "no management success can compensate for failure in leadership." Covey aptly depicts the difference between managers and leaders with his analogy of workers scrub cutting in the jungle. The group is moving through the undergrowth, making excellent progress, efficient, schedules and smokos well organised, scythes sharpened, performance management systems well in place - the epitome of efficiency and high standards and accountability. One worker stops for a moment, takes time out to climb the tallest tree and looks around, reflects, and calls "Wrong jungle!" This worker is the true leader says Covey - the other, organising the group, the manager. My research indicated that these New Zealand principals had not been surveying the entire situation and assessing what future lies ahead for New Zealand's children but were submerged in management details such as July Grading Returns, supervising scrub cutters and school painters and checking the roll account. As well as these additional tasks, the underlying philosophical assumptions in the political arena also continuously worked against these school leaders being able to view their roles as the educational leaders of their schools. Many of these principals felt they were embedded in the management paradigm. One principal reading this article in its draft form agreed "yes, it is so easy to run around with your head down." Management must be secondary to leadership. Principals must first and foremost think of their role as one of educational leadership as the way they view their primary task and their school will ultimately affect how successful their school is (Sergiovanni, 1992; Southworth, 1993).

I began to ponder on this idea and wondered what our New Zealand schools would be like if not only principals were critically reflective and political about schooling and the purpose of it, but if teachers were also critically reflective about the curriculum and their part in shaping and defining it for their students and children were encouraged to question and view things from many different perspectives when they were at school. Teachers are the products of the system. Teachers come up through schools as these children, and go back into schools as teachers. Some of these teachers become principals. Principals were once students - they were told what to do, they were encouraged not to challenge. They became teachers - they did as they were asked, they delivered the curriculum unthinkingly. They became principals - they do as they are asked. There is no room for "rebelliousness" in this vicious circle of reproduction (Bourdieu, 1979).

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In schools today students should be encouraged to see everything from a variety of perspectives and not delivered knowledge as if it was "truth". They need to be perpetually encouraged to see the wider ramifications, the different outcomes, the perspectives that knowledge has been written from.

This article appeared in the local paper last year:

Hogie Hohua is one of the parents enjoying the concert. His reason for sending his 12 year old son Inia to T A School is simple. "The history we were taught when I went to school was from a pakeha point of view, we were taught people like Te Rauparaha and Te Kooti were rebels and traitors. Imagine my surprise when I found out they were warriors in the true sense of the word and were fighting for the rights of Maori; THAT'S the kind of history I want my son to know."

Shouldn't ALL schools offer that? Students should be encouraged to challenge dominant interpretations of knowledge and not just accept facts as truth. They should be encouraged to think, challenge and exchange ideas in classrooms. Teachers should be encouraged to do the same in staffrooms.

An article in the Education Review newspaper last year stated that "special" schools were being set up to give student teachers...

...the opportunity to see powerful new teaching and learning strategies being modelled and practised. Co-operative learning, critical and creative thinking skills, self directed learning, responsible self management, quality management by students and teachers, successful study programmes and collaborative team management are all part of the programme.

Shouldn't ALL schools do that? Of course such places would then be fraught with tensions and contradictions. The possibility of exploring a wide range of views could be threatening to some. Conflict is often viewed as something negative, not something to be valued. Yet without conflict and tension nothing will change. Someone who questions and challenges the 'natural order' are not usually valued. They are given names with negative connotations such as "radicals" or "activists" if they are adults or "precocious" if they are children. Student initiative and voice need to be encouraged in schools, to continually work toward the ideal of a democratic society for future generations. When we were at school we may have been taught that democracy was a type of political governance, that our country, among many others, enjoyed. It meant that we could all fully participate in elections and have a say in the way things were done around here. But

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were we taught, knowingly or unknowingly, the conditions upon which a democracy depends? Maxine Greene (1985, p. 3) stated that:

democracy is neither a possession nor a guaranteed achievement. It is forever in the making; it might be thought of as possibility - moral and imaginative possibility. For surely it has to do with the ways persons attend to one another, and interact with one another. It has to do with choices and alternatives, with ... the capacity to look at things as if they could be otherwise.

This last statement encapsulates the importance of democratic values and social justice and therefore educative transformative leadership in New Zealand, amidst a climate characterised by individualism, economics and market driven notions of schools.

A democratic way of life emphasises co-operation not competition. Democracy means caring for the common good - not individuality and self-interest. Democracy prizes diversity, not just the interests and aspirations of the majority and most powerful groups. Democracy could presumably demonstrate how to achieve equal opportunity - not huge differences in achievement levels for some groups.

We are heading towards perilous times for education unless we can encourage students, teachers and principals to become critically reflective to the extent that they have the capacity "to look at things as if they could be otherwise" (Greene, 1985, p.3). Perilous times because what is important in education could get lost in the rhetoric and policies of the New Right, and perilous because we could lose sight of why we chose education as our career. Unless we are able to critically reflect on international research and to critique policy and "look at things as if they could be otherwise", we run the risk of being caught with our heads down in experiments on education that could have serious detrimental effects on the quality of education throughout the world. Critical reflection is the quality that is a pre-requisite to the achievement of all other conditions of a democratic way of life. As Dewey said when talking about education in our schools as early as 1916, if people are to secure and maintain a democratic way of life, they must have opportunities to learn what that way of life means and how it might be led.

But there is probably no more difficult and problematic concept in education to achieve than the possibility of democratic schools. Researchers have searched and researched in vain for some evidence of truly democratic schools (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1986). What would they look like? They would be learning communities where students and teachers work together building educational experiences which make a real difference to people's lives. They would be learning communities built on mutual respect where people are taught how to think about rather than receive a specific set of

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knowledge. Democratic schools are about teaching people how to live in the world in this society and giving them those experiences. These schools work at developing life-long learners who can identify problems and work creatively towards solutions. And in this information age, these schools realise that the ability to use information critically, to extract relevant meaning from text and screen, may be one of the most important skills any person in society could have. As Johnston and Nicholls (1995, p.99) described:

Within such a context students can begin to redefine their views of knowledge and of the point of schooling. They are more likely to see school as a place where brute facts and basic skills are subordinate to the diverse evolving views of what the curriculum should become in their classroom. They are also more likely to take seriously their own and each other's multiple voices, engaging and challenging with respect "even those voices they would prefer not to hear", as they must if they are to participate in a democracy.

Perhaps the most important condition of a democracy is to have a society of people who are able to be critically reflective and questioning and are accepting of a wide range of perspectives and views on all issues. This personal quality could foreshadow the possibility of achieving all other conditions. This would encourage the open flow of ideas...the concern for dignity and rights of minorities. "Democratic schools do not just happen by chance...they are led by leaders who make explicit attempts to create democratic structures and processes by which school life is carried out...and who encourage teachers to create a curriculum that will give young people democratic experiences" (Apple & Beane, 1995, p. 9). Our New Zealand Curriculum Framework recognises that the formal, planned curriculum is one factor amongst many which influence learning...students' learning opportunities at school will be affected by a range of factors, such as classroom interaction patterns, access to resources, and the expectations, attitudes, and behaviour of family, teachers, and peers. The principles seek to ensure that the day-to-day practices of schools reinforce the formal curriculum. (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 6). Therefore democratic experiences and learning about the way things are done around here are also key factors in a students' learning experiences while at school. The Framework also states:

The New Zealand Curriculum recognises that all students should have the opportunity to undertake study in essential areas of learning and to develop essential skills. Such learning will enable them to develop their potential, to continue learning throughout life, and to participate

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effectively and productively in New Zealand's democratic society and in a competitive world economy.

(Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 3).

A democratic curriculum emphasises access to a wide range of information and the right of those of varied opinion to have their viewpoints heard. Instead of teachers being deliverers of knowledge or so-called "truth" they would develop learners who are "critical readers" of their society. Teachers and children then shed the passive role of being knowledge consumers and assume the active role of "meaning makers" (Apple & Beane, 1995). Democratic schools and classrooms confront these issues in their curriculum. They have courses examining ethics in education and business; they discuss and debate the issue of immigration; they look at censorship on the internet and violence in the community; they study justice; they discuss sexism and racism and why people think the way they do. They learn to see things from many points of view.

Johnston and Nicholls (1995, p. 96) summed this up by stating:

Current events, history, indeed all knowledge of consequence can be interrogated with respect to its reasonableness, significance, and moral and political implications. Students would take initiative for deciding what knowledge is worthwhile, how to gain that knowledge, and when it has been gained; that is, the curriculum would help students develop voice about the curriculum.

The internet is a source of far greater knowledge and ideas than a teacher could ever bring to the classroom. The more we know, the more we know we don't know. Therefore the teacher's job should be to facilitate learning, not to bring knowledge but to bring the knowledge of how to critique knowledge. Future generations of children need to be able to filter ideas, analyse them and be critically reflective. Democratic talk must be fostered in the classroom and children need to be encouraged to ask "awkward" questions and develop voice so that they then continue to do this as citizens within our democratic society.

They need to be challenged to ask such questions as:

How do you know what you know? (Evidence)

From whose viewpoint is this being presented? (Perspective)

How is this event or work connected to others? (Connections)

What if things were different? (Supposition)

Why is this important? (Relevance)

(Meier & Schwarz, 1995)

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Unless people are able to view the world through sets of different lens they are possibly still unable to recognise that 'truth' is manufactured by the perspectives of those who develop it - truth about the slips in South America, or the wars in New Zealand's history, or about what constitutes good leadership, or the way things are done around here. Children should not be locked into seeing things through only one lens - that of their teacher. Teachers need to be encouraged to problematise education and need a tolerance for the anxiety that such an unpredictable process brings. These teachers are facilitators of learning communities where children are taught the keys to knowledge rather than the knowledge itself. Giving people voice is about being able to listen and construct knowledge or ways of being that take different perspectives into account. Unless teachers can and are able to be critically reflective themselves, not just placid consumers of knowledge and delivers of curriculum, they won't have the ability to be able to enhance and value this in children.

Teachers need to be aware of the part they play in the schooling process as curriculum decisionmakers. They need to be aware of their vantage points which create instantly a "them-and-us" type situation in the classroom (Sultana, 1989). Often non-performing students are seen by teachers as having the inability to perform. It doesn't take children very long to learn that schooling does not seem to match with their experiences. They are picking up an approach in living and an attitude in learning and the medium is the message (Meighan, 1986). The medium for these children is the atmosphere of the school, the priorities, the relationships, the teacher expectations. And the message? Sometimes the messages are of racism, eurocentrism, sexism, nationalism, something wrong with being Maori, with being Asian, social class bias, failure, single-parent deficit. Diversity in schools is not always encouraged and valued. Children, teachers or principals are not valued if they speak out, challenge or query the efficacy of certain procedures or policies or ways of doing things.

Education *is* a political matter and teachers and principals are political actors. They are political not only when they take part in stopwork meetings and engage in militant union activity on their own behalf, but also when they, as they must, create or participate in structures, deliver curricula, research topics to teach, decide on certain assessment procedures instead of others. In all these ways and more, teachers are, overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously, declaring themselves for or against a status quo. They are political even when they are silent about specific issues (Sultana, 1989, p.3)

Research in New Zealand found that "most school administrators hold the view that effective teacher education prepares students to fit into the existing norms and practices in schools...certainly our principals' comments indicated that they prefer beginning teachers

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who accommodate easily to the particular culture of their school's current practices...(Cameron and Grudnoff, 1993, p. 3). Research elsewhere in the world has shown that teachers and schools are indeed characterised by uniformity rather than plurality (Anyon, 1980; Gaskell, 1986). And yet society is not homogeneous and uniform.

Perhaps getting teachers and principals to become critically reflective is going to be no simple task. We are caught between the need to stand firm in our beliefs - and the realisation that there are people who have power over us. Most people fear the price that might be paid for "talking back" for being "rebellious" to parents, teachers, employers. It is certainly not something encouraged in New Zealand as a valued trait. But critically reflective leadership is a politicising force which then becomes transformative in social change and the impact is quickly apparent. Critical reflection often leads to action in the public sphere. This often occurs through unions but principals can also take a more active professional role as individuals. However, "standing up to the power structure requires courage, solidarity, and conviction. It is a lot to ask" (O'Loughlin, 1995, p. 114).

The model of Principals' Partnerships provided the courage, solidarity and conviction as the principals in my research discovered (Robertson, 1995). Principals could subvert and invert the dominant discourses by collaborating and deconstructing them. They could then become authors of their own meaning and gained (or regained) greater authority in education. It was often not until they had seen other principals either doing things differently or doing things in the same manner, that they began to see the 'bigger picture' of what was occurring in principals' practice in New Zealand. Whereas previously they may have felt it was just themselves experiencing the difficulty or issue, they now began to see that there were others experiencing the same feelings and issues. They began to see the problems were not only at the micro level of their school, but were also at the macro level of education in New Zealand generally. Therefore, the professional partnerships helped these school leaders to refocus on their leadership for a long enough period of time to be critically reflective not only about what is happening within their schools but also about what is happening to school leadership in New Zealand. One principal summed it up as follows:

I now think more about the whole situation and not just my own corner—I think because the group is diverse and we all know a lot about each other's problems therefore we started relating to other types of schools—this has turned to be a general view of all schools and problems experienced by them generally.

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The Partnerships' programme focused the principals on to the leadership issues that they were all experiencing. It helped move these principals beyond day-to-day problem solving into more critical reflection on their practice and, subsequently, emancipatory actions. The programme gave these principals a feeling of united strength to deal with the problems, sometimes at the school level; sometimes at the regional or national level. They described a sense of freedom from the constraints of some of the official systems that they felt were inhibiting their educational leadership actions in the school. The processes of working closely with a colleague for reflection on practice then, become those of emancipatory action research. The following case study demonstrates how one principal gained this feeling of agency and took political action at the local and national level on the issue of the Education Review Office Effectiveness Reviewing procedures.

This principal had been notified of an forthcoming Education Review Office visit to conduct an effectiveness review in his school. At the full group session of the Partnerships' programme he set an objective of what he hoped to do—"to lead the staff positively through the review procedure." He felt that his partner would be able to assist him to do this by "evaluating my performance in a non-routine type of school day—in terms of interacting with staff; the review team; the events of the day." Then began a phase of data gathering. His partner had previously been through an effectiveness review and he had discussed proceedings with him and read the report from the Review Office which his partner had received. He read through his own school's previous review report. He talked with his staff.

He developed a plan of action and the shadowing of the principal on the Review Day became the first step in this action research. Then began a period of reconnaissance and critical reflection. The partner carried out a verbal evaluative feedback session after the reviewers had departed for the day. He later gave the principal concise notes of evaluative feedback on his observations of the afternoon with the reviewers. The principal then made a cassette reflection in which he reflected on the actions of the review day and about education generally in New Zealand. He thought back to words he remembered from a conference he had been to four years earlier:

The focus has changed again, just a little bit more, and it is getting back to what Ivan Snook warned us about at our 1989 Intermediate School Conference. He said that you are going to be required to provide education like sausage manufacturers fill sausages and it will be inputs and outputs and no allowance made for individuals. It is not quite like that but it is very strongly "How do you define achievement for the whole school and in particular in these areas?"

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He reflected again on his philosophy and the school's achievement statements and gathered new insights. He began reflecting more deeply about the realities of educational leadership in the school. On the one hand, educative leadership in trying to work with senior staff who were not as effective as some of the assistant teachers in the school and on the other hand, needing to take two hours out of the review week to deal with non performing painters to try and get something done about the ineffective job they had done in the school. He said cynically about the latter that he guessed that it in "some obscure way contributes to the advancement of the educational cause". The report of the effectiveness review arrived back from the Education Review Office. The principal described how he felt when he received it: "I took objection to the phraseology "The Board of Trustees is unable to demonstrate..." He then discussed it further with his partner and told him that he was personally not going to accept it and that he hoped he was going to get the support of his Board of Trustees in not accepting it. His reconnaissance included discussions with his Board of Trustees about the actions that he proposed to take. They supported his proposed action of non acceptance of the report written as it was thus presented. The principal then contacted the manager of the local regional Education Review Office and stated that he was not willing to accept his report and demanded to meet again with him and the reviewers. This meeting was positive and the reviewers agreed to alter the wording in the way the principal wanted.

Reconnaissance then included talking to other principals who had also received reports around that time. There was a principals' conference on at the time and the principal took every opportunity to gather support. The principal raised the issue with two reviewers who were attending the conference. He spoke also with two ex-reviewers. He spoke with other principals and one asked him for a copy of his report as she also had a concern about the one he had received from a recent effectiveness review.

The next action he took arose almost simultaneously. The Chief Executive Officer of the Education Review Office overheard some of the conversations and this principal then, in the height of this support and confidence in his convictions, spoke to her directly about the concerns that he had about the reviewing and reporting process. This is how he described the day in a later interview. "It was discussed quite widely and I got tremendous professional support and as a result of that I think we have made a breakthrough on certain phraseology around the country."

This principal had taken his actions to a national level. The next action he took was at a meeting of the local principals' group. The Regional Manager of the Review Office was scheduled to speak to the group and he had asked this principal to raise the issue and put it on the agenda. Various other principals then put in their views which further supported this principal's actions. This principal's actions helped the other principals in the group. He said "Now the other principals all know what is expected of them in terms of the

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effectiveness reviews and the data that they need to have to show this progress." He empowered the other principals in his local group. The effects of his actions went wider than his own school, to regional level and then "...on to a national basis in terms of getting the phrases right—because it had to be cleared through head office. Probably my lobbying...".

His "lobbying" and the recent politicisation within his role as an educational leader meant his actions had an effect at the national level. When asked whether he felt that his confidence to be proactive had arisen from having his partner present on the review day and from being able to discuss the report with him in the light of his first hand knowledge of what went on, his reply left no doubt that the partnership had been his initial source of strength:

Absolutely. I suppose that the mere presence of a colleague that knew what it was all about, who had been through it himself, did several things. It spurred you on to give a good performance. I knew also that the impressions and information that he would be storing up would be informed ones if I needed further support for any follow-up.

He went on to add "I am not a political activist. I have never been one of those" but said that he had felt so strongly about the issue and knew also that he had the support of his colleagues. This case study demonstrates an example of how the process within the Partnerships' programme assisted one of the principals to confront [his] own circumstances and to gain a sense of agency. Through the support and affirmation and lessening of feelings of isolation by working closely together in their partnerships, the principals became open to new ideas and growth. They became willing to accept responsibility for their own leadership development, and in doing so, developed an awareness of the leadership actions and development of others around them. This awareness and fortification from unity thus received led to the principals taking informed committed actions, praxis, which in turn led to their feelings of agency. In this way then, the partnerships' model of professional development became institutionalised in their practice.

The vehicle to achieve praxis was critical reflection and the professional development model helped the principals achieve praxis by challenging them with outside perspectives and helping them to see beyond their own school site to the larger picture of what was happening in education generally in New Zealand. Helping them to see that they were part of a much larger system, in which the issues they were feeling were being experienced by other principals as well, gave these principals the agency to realise that they could act otherwise.

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The most vital move in "the practical realization of interests" (Giddens, 1976, p. 53) was in allowing another principal access to the inner realms of their practice and being allowed to observe the usually sheltered actions of a colleague. The support gained from the critical friend assisted them to be firm about their educational values and to use these as a guiding force in taking a stance on issues of importance in their schools. The principals realised that they could take an educative stance with the Education Review Office, and also with their own Board of Trustees. They were supported and challenged to do this by the outsider and the critical friend. With effective reflective interviewing, the partner principal could challenge the principal's ways-of-knowing and lead them to double-loop learning where they began to reflect upon the reflection of their practice. The methods of evaluative feedback and reflective interviewing were important in leading the principals into critical reflection on practice. This led to a critique of dominant ideology which assisted them towards achieving praxis through taking emancipatory actions. This critical analysis was paramount to a commitment to being self-reflective.

Principals' Partnerships, as a model of professional development, assisted these principals to start to be a role model for their staff by encouraging critical reflection, by valuing challenges, by seeking different perspectives, by valuing plurality. We need principals who are facilitators of democratic learning communities...who value teachers who experiment and question the status quo, who in turn are able to value children who challenge and question the way things are done. Critical thinking involves a continual questioning of assumptions and values. These 12 school leaders in this research believed that their involvement in the Principals' Partnerships' programme had helped them to keep education central to their leadership practice.

Only by structuring time out for critical reflection, such as in the Professional Partnerships' model of professional development - for thinking - to climb the tallest tree and look around - could these principals begin to see the big picture, and then the conscientization gained helped them to understand that when they thought they were nearly there, there was no there (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1993). they then knew they were part of the big picture, but they wondered "is someone else is doing the painting?" (Shor, 1980, p.47).

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